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## The South: Backward and Sectional or Progressive and National.

Clarence Poe in The Outlook.

"The South is backward and sectional."

This has been of late an oft repeated statement in the magazines and newspapers of other sections. I write to assert, on the contrary, that the South is progressive and National. And I write, furthermore, to express my convictions that the South is today the most broadly National section of America.

I The charge which I seek to repel has been made with regrettable frequency for many years, but in recent months the cry seems to have become a chorus. And I write my reply simply as a plea for that "straight Americanism," that "unhyphenated Americanism," of which we now hear so much. I write as a Southerner in appeal to the men and women of the North for a clearer and fairer understanding of the heart and spirit of their brothers and sisters south of the line. For it is an unfortunate fact that the very people who are saying most about "Americanism" and "American unity" are in many cases the very people who are most often appealing to sectional feeling, and thereby—are they not?—tending to promote Northern distrust of the South. And if there is danger to our Nation in having our newly arrived immigrants temporarily divided into German-Americans, Aus-

tro-Americans, Anglo-Americans, etc., how much greater is the danger that would hyphenate our permanent residents into Northern-Americans, Southern-American Western-Americans, etc.?

Is it with evidence of restrained euphemism that Mr. F. M. Davenport, in The Outlook recently, used the expression "chained to a belated political South." One of the most largely circulated American weeklies not only declares that the South is politically backward, but that it is the section of America "where all the attributes of modern civilization, material and spiritual, exist in the smallest degree." And the chairman of the Publicity Committee of one of the two great political parties publishes a two column official deliverance naming all the Southern men now holding high place in the councils of the Nation, and pointedly reminds the "Union soldier" who "saved" the Union that these men are from "the States which attempted to destroy it."

And the utterances I have just quoted are unfortunately but typical of many others that have recently appeared in publications of National circulation. In the hope that a knowledge of the facts will make for greater Americanism, I speak that I do know and testify that I have seen.

Let us take, in the first place, the sectional appeal in the present-day references to the ancient strife between the States—those "old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago." The specific allusion I have quoted must have been to suggest, if it meant anything, that the South cannot be trusted as other sections might be trusted in loyalty to the great Nation of which it is a part. May I say in answer that my father was a Confederate soldier, that my ante-bellum ancestors were all slaveholders, that my rearing was among people left in poverty after the war, that I have traveled in and discussed Southern questions in every state from Virginia to Texas, inclusive, and that years of my life were spent in a home presided over by a woman whose father was a distinguished Confederate general brought back slain from Antietam, and yet I can truthfully say that I do not recall having once heard man, woman, or child in the South say "I am sorry we are in the Union rather than in the Confederacy," or "I am sorry slavery was abolished." I voice the common feeling of the South when I say that I am proud that my father fought in the armies of the Confederacy, but I am also glad that the stars in their courses fought against him. I voice the common feeling of the South when I say I believe that under the Constitution secession was an implied right, and that I am not sorry that my father fought for the recognition of that Constitutional law, but I am glad that triumph came to that "law higher than the Constitution" which Seward years before had foreseen as the final victor in the "irrepressible conflict."

So far from the South being the most sectional part of America, I weigh my words when I declare my belief that it is in opinion and sympathies the least sectional, the most broadly National, part of America today. In other words, I am confident that the South has taken into its heart and has fairly appraised the heroes of the North as the North has not yet received and appraised the heroes of the South. On my father's mantel as I grew up was a bust of his great commander, Lee; on the walls, a picture of Grant. I wonder whether many Northern homes exemplify sympathies so catholic. When I asked a school-boy kinsman a few hours ago what pictures of great Americans were in his school-room, he answered, "Washington, Lincoln, and Lee;" and I wonder how many schools outside Dixie boast greater freedom from sectional feeling than this typical Southern

school. On the night that I read the official political arraignment of "the States which attempted to destroy the Union," it chanced that another Southern editor and I read together with great approval Edwin Markham's magnificent tribute to Lincoln; but I wonder how many readers in other sections have let a tear fall over the poignant heart-break that throbs eternally through the lines of Father Ryan's "Sword of Lee" and "The Conquered Banner." Go into any Southern high school and you are likely to find pictures of Whittier and Lowell. Do the schools elsewhere recognize in equal measure the genius of Lanier and Timrod? I read "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and nearly every educated friend, like myself, reads some Northern or Western newspaper; I wonder how many men in the North read such a paper as the Columbia "State" with its blending of Southern spirit and National patriotism. When my father-in-law, the late Governor Aycock, spoke here on Lee's birthday, a few weeks before his death, he paused in the middle of his eulogy of Lee to pay a tribute of unrestrained praise to Lincoln; and I wonder whether many orators speaking on Lincoln's birthday pause to inculcate regard for the great Confederate who suffered the crucifixion of his soul in having to choose between Virginia and the Union.

I hope our friends in other sections will pardon me if I have seemed to boast of what I conceive to be the South's genuine freedom from sectionalism. I have mentioned it because I believe the South's real feeling is too little understood and too little appreciated. In fact, I believe it will surprise the average Northerner, though it would not surprise the average Southerner, when he reads my statement that I, a descendant of Confederates and slaveholders, have lived out half my three-score years and ten among these people and their sons without once having heard the wish expressed that the war had ended differently or that negro slavery had survived. If the South is not too proud to acknowledge the unwisdom of slavery and secession, should the North be too proud to acknowledge the blunders of reconstruction, or to admit that, however mistaken they may have been, the men of the South who felt constrained to oppose the unity of the Nation were not more conscious of unworthy purpose than were our Revolutionary ancestors who felt it their duty to destroy the unity of the British Empire?

Moreover, if the spirit of the South is such as I have honestly sought to describe it in this article, am I not justified in the belief that the true spirit of the North is also found, not in the sectional utterances which have had such unfortunately large publicity of late, but rather in the spirit of Lincoln, with his "malice toward none and charity for all," in the spirit of Grant, with his "Let us have peace," in the spirit of McKinley, with his suggestion that the graves of Confederate and Union soldiers alike be the care of the great mother-heart of the Nation, "lamenting all her fallen sons;" in the spirit of Roosevelt, with his splendidly impartial tribute to all "who fought bravely for the right as God gave them to see the right," whether they wore the blue or the gray?

III I now come to the statement that the South is politically and socially backward and unprogressive. One editor of National reputation goes further, and specifically asserts that "in all the attributes of modern civilization, material and spiritual," the South lags behind other sections. One wonders on what basis so harsh a judgment can be hazarded, but, since it is made, let us examine it fairly.

I. As for wealth and the "material attributes of civilization," it should not be forgotten, first, that rural States are not usually wealthy,

and that we have a predominantly rural section—the one section of America of which it is true that there are more people engaged in farming than in all other occupations combined. In the second place, we have a section whose development was woefully checked by war and its consequences. Here, in North Carolina, for example, it was not till 1890 that the census showed our people with as large a per capita wealth as they had in 1860, though the per capita wealth of the United States had more than doubled. North Carolina actually had fewer manufacturing establishments in 1890 than it had when Lincoln was elected President. In the next decade, however, the State struck its pace and made a greater net gain in rank among States in agriculture, manufactures, and population than any other old State east of the Rocky Mountains; nor has it lagged since.

2. As for the "spiritual attributes of civilization," the matter is one about which it becomes no one to boast; but, since the matter is called to question, it seems not improper to ask the reader to inquire whether he will find anywhere in America a section in which religious influences are stronger than in the South; where the sanctity of the home is more highly regarded (South Carolina alone among the States has no divorce law at all); where commercialism and lust for money are less rampant; where the public service has been freer from graft and corruption; or where such notable progress has been made in grappling with that arch-enemy of all spiritual agencies, the whiskey evil. In fact, it would seem as if that great and gifted New England Senator George F. Hoar, might have anticipated and answered any criticism of the South at this point when he uttered these generous words:

"As I grow older I have learned not only to respect and esteem, but to love, the great qualities which belong to my fellow citizens of the Southern States. They are a noble race. . . . Their love for home, their chivalrous respect for women, their courage, their delicate sense of honor, their constancy which can abide by an opinion or purpose or an interest for their State through adversity and through prosperity, through the years and through the generations, are things by which the people of the more merciful North may take a lesson. And there is another thing: covetousness, corruption and the temptation of money, have not yet found a place in Southern politics."

3. When one says that the Southern States are less progressive than others, it also becomes necessary to establish a just standard for comparison. Leaders of rural progress both here and in Europe, for example, are now laying most emphasis on marketing and rural credits; and North Carolina, a Southern State, North Carolina, a Southern rural State, was the first State in the Union to establish a regular official department to help farmers in marketing their crops; and also the first, I understand, to organize rural credit unions after the fashion of European models. North Carolina has also been conspicuous for leadership in organizing farm women institutes and farm life schools, while South Carolina has just attracted National attention by its agricultural warehouse system. Both States were also pioneers in temperance legislation. And so I raise the question whether the passage of such advanced agricultural legislation in rural States is not just as truly a mark of progressiveness as the passage of a workman's compensation act in an industrial State like Massachusetts.

4. But is not the Southerner a sinner above all that dwell in Jerusalem in the matter of lynching and unfair treatment of the negro? It is asked. It is true, 'tis pity, we have some lynchings, but it should be remembered that we not only have two utterly dissimilar races living side by side, but we also have, as has been mentioned, a predominantly rural section, and in all thinly settled rural sections—whether South or West—the absence of police protection promotes a tendency to lynch law. I sometimes wonder, however, whether, in proportion to their numbers, more negroes are lynched in North Carolina, for instance, than in Ohio or Illinois. And whether there is more race antagonism between white man and black in the South than there is between white man and yellow in California—or was between white man and red in colonial America. This is said, not to excuse lynching, for I believe nothing can excuse it, but only to give the Northern reader a keener appreciation of the difficulties that confront us in establishing the absolute supremacy of the courts.

5. "But what about child labor?"

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attendance?" is another question. "There are five States which do not yet have compulsory education laws—and they are all Southern," said one writer recently. Here again, however, if we may judge the South not by where it stands but by the direction in which it is going and the speed with which it is moving—the only fair test of the present spirit of people—the charge of unprogressiveness fails. In fact, I doubt whether any similar group of Northern States ever made more progress in compulsory attendance legislation in any five year period than the Southern States have made the last five years. When the Russell Sage Foundation published its compulsory attendance map in 1912, it showed six Southern States black—signifying that they were without any form of compulsory attendance laws; now there is only one such State, and in the other States of the South these laws have been immeasurably strengthened during this five-year period. As for child labor legislation, it is only fair to the South to say that our industrial development is very recent, and that it takes time to arouse the public conscience to evils arising out of new conditions. Granting that we have not done enough, I doubt whether New England at the same stage of manufacturing development would have done more.

6. In answer to another charge sometimes made against the South, it must be admitted that we have sometimes put rough, primeval, untrained men like Tillman into high office, and some incompetent men. But, granting this, must it not be admitted that Senator Hoar's tribute to Southern politics was not undeserved—that "the low temptation to meanness has not found a place" in it? Let the reader call over to himself the names of those Senators and political bosses conspicuous for alliance with special interests and predatory wealth and ascertain for himself to what extent representatives of this type have come from the South. Moreover, there are evidences on every hand that the average voter is demanding men of broader culture in public office. Arkansas by primary vote has just taken a distinguished scholar from its University, Dr. C. H. Brough, as its next Governor; the Texas primary almost sent a scholar statesman of the same type, Dr. S. P. Brooks, to the United States Senate; while the last ninety days have witnessed the compulsory retirement from Congress of "Cyclone" Davis of Texas, "Alfalfa Bill," of Oklahoma, and the defeat of Cole Blaise in South Carolina.

IV There is much more evidence that I should like to present, but I hope the facts I have already given will in some measure dispel that seeming distrust of the South whose recent manifestations we have noted with surprise and grief—a distrust due, I am sure, not to any lack of fraternal feeling on the part of the people in other sections, but simply to lack of information about the real heart and spirit of the South of today. If the test of a section is "not where it stands, but how it is moving," the South is unmistakably progressive, and no section of America is more broadly National or patriotic. And I feel that it will make for a greater America and for a truer Americanism if the people of North and East and West are brought to a realization of this fact. In the language of that unforgettable quotation with which Mississippi's soldier-statesman, Lamar, closed his eulogy of Charles Sumner:

"My countryman, know one another and you will love one another!"

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